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ABSTRACT

A practicum project designed to alleviate behavior and discipline problems at a Florida elementary school through the use of a conflict resolution curriculum that emphasized group interaction is described. The third- and fourth-grade students were asked to work cooperatively on projects that guided them through a series of strategies that taught them how to develop respect for themselves and others. Observations were made each month during the school year to ascertain if children were responding to the intervention. Pre- and posttest observations and surveys found that the students learned to communicate effectively with one another and respect themselves and others while learning to accept the unique qualities inherent in all individuals. (Six appendixes provide copies of parent letters, attitude surveys, monthly and final observation report forms, posttest surveys, and references for classroom intervention techniques.) (MDM)

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ED 366 426

IMPROVING CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG THIRD AND FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH GROUP INTERACTION

By

Myra S. Locke

Cluster XXXVIII

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A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program
In Child and Youth Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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March 16, 1993

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This practicum report was submitted by Myra S. Locke under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

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Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D., Adviser

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All the little peacemakers who made this practicum possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENT. iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS. iv

LIST OF TABLES. v

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION. 1

Description of Work Setting and Community. 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role. 4

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM. 6

Problem Description. 6
Problem Documentation. 8
Causative Analysis. 10
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature. 11

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS. 15

Goals and Expectations. 15
Behavioral Objectives. 15
Measurement of Objectives. 16

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY. 19

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions. 20
Description of Selected Solution. 23
Report of Action Taken. 25

Page

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS. . . 44

Results. 44
Discussion. 49
Recommendations. 60
Dissemination. 62

REFERENCES. 64

Appendices

A LETTER TO PARENTS. 67
B ATTITUDE SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN GRADES THREE AND FOUR. 69
C MONTHLY OBSERVATION. 72
D FINAL OBSERVATION. 74
E POSTTEST. 77
F SOURCES FOR CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES. 80

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Observation of Social Infractions for a Two Week Period. 8

2 Yes and No Attitude Responses of Third-Grade Students. 9

3 Yes and No Attitude Responses of Fourth-Grade Students. 9

4 Table of Teacher Observations of Skills for Grade 3. 46

5 Table of Teacher Observations of Skills for Grade 4. 46

6 Table of Teacher Observations of Grades 3 and 4 47

7 Table of Children's Responses of Attitudes on Posttest for Grades 3 and 4. 48

ABSTRACT

Improving Conflict Resolution Among Third and Fourth-Grade Students Through Group Interaction. Locke, Myra S., 1993: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: Conflict Resolution Strategies/Cooperative Grouping/Child Communication Skills/ Problem Solving Techniques/Mediation/Positive Interaction/ Peacemakers/Self-Management Skills.

The purpose of this practicum was to improve conflict resolution skills among third and fourth-grade students through strategies that utilized group interaction. Other objectives were to improve communication among children and help them find alternative ways to solve problems.

The children were asked to work cooperatively on projects that guided them through a series of strategies that taught them how to develop respect for themselves and others. The students were given opportunities to work in pairs and in concert with the total group. Observations were made each month to ascertain if children were communicating, engaging in positive interactions and working well in cooperative groups using positive intervention skills. At the end of eight months the students tried to resolve a conflict depicted in a sample scenario, to see if they could successfully implement the conflict resolution strategies they had learned.

Results of this practicum were positive. Children learned to communicate effectively with one another, respect themselves and others while learning to accept unique qualities inherent in all individuals. The children were able to solve their problems in non-violent ways and assume the role of peacemakers. The expected outcomes were to enable children to help one another to develop better self-management skills, make appropriate decisions and successfully achieve goals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

This practicum was carried out in a public elementary school and involved third and fourth-grade students in a multi-ethnic community.

The school building was built in 1960. It was originally built to accommodate a sub-division of homes that had grown too large for the neighboring school. As the city grew, more and more people left for the suburbs in order to enjoy a more spacious living environment.

The original building plans limited the school population to approximately 500 children. Additions became necessary as the community became more populated. Adjacent buildings were added to include four kindergarten units and six more classes in a large open-space building. With the addition of more classes, the enrollment grew to 750 children, which is the current enrollment.

The area is surrounded by different kinds of dwellings. The most prevalent of these are private homes but there are also townhouses or attached homes. There are apartments for people who wish to rent or who cannot afford to own a home or townhouse.

The school is located in the western part of a large

sprawling county. It is built on the edge of an important conservation area. Landfill was added to accommodate the additional housing for a large suburban population. Through the years the area has continued to grow and flourish. Shopping centers were added to the community and new churches of various denominations have been built to serve the populace. A large regional library was added to meet the needs of the community.

Shortly after the elementary school was constructed a large high school was built nearby. Other elementary schools and middle schools have since been added to the feeder pattern of the existing school.

In 1972 the state built a large university close to the school. This university attracted people from all over the world, as well as from the United States. The students at the university brought their families to the area and enrolled their children in the school.

The original homes in the community were priced to attract middle-class families. Many of the original families were white-collar professionals but the area also included blue-collar workers. Most of the residents in the area appeared to be concerned about the community.

There was very little unemployment among the people in the area and most of the residents appeared to be living well above the poverty level. At the time the homes were built the ethnic population consisted of Caucasian families, mostly of

European heritage. Those residents of Hispanic heritage had immigrated from Cuba in small numbers over several decades.

An explosive political situation in the Caribbean created an influx of new Cuban refugees. Existing Cuban families took in newly-arrived relatives. Area churches sponsored a project known as Peter Pan, which found homes for children whose families were unable to emigrate from Cuba. These children were housed in homes of Cuban families in the neighborhood and attended the neighborhood school, adding to the enrollment.

In 1980 Fidel Castro opened the doors of Cuba to allow many more families to leave. This exodus was known as the Mariel Boat Lift. By this time many of the original non-Hispanic American residents had moved from the neighborhood. Homes were now occupied by Cuban families whose fortunes had improved considerably. As these families took in more newly arrived relatives, the enrollment at the school changed to include a majority of Cuban children. These children were born in America to refugees now living in the area. The enrollment also included children of refugees from other Hispanic countries.

The political crisis in the Caribbean spread to the countries in Central America. Those most affected were Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. Families from these countries began to migrate to the area and rent apartments.

Other countries in Central and South America, such as Costa Rica and Columbia, were hit hard by economic

deprivation. People from these countries began to move to the United States and find homes in the school neighborhood.

The economic makeup of the area, which had previously consisted mainly of middle-class families who owned their own homes, now began to change to residents with a lower economic base. More families requested free and reduced lunch for their children at school. New buildings were made up of apartments and lower-priced attached homes.

Two major airlines headquartered in the county went out of business, thus eliminating many positions held by people who lived in the neighborhood. The loss of these jobs had a profound impact on other businesses in the area. Other major layoffs in business and industry caused families to apply for more government or welfare benefits in order to survive. It is because of the economic situation in the area that the school has come close to Chapter I status.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

This school has a moderate-sized faculty. The administration consists of the principal and an assistant principal. The staff includes a counselor, 26 classroom teachers and 12 special teachers. Most of the teachers show a real concern for the welfare of the students and demonstrate a caring and professional attitude in the classroom. Many of the teachers hold advanced degrees. In 1989 the teachers

voted for this school to become a School Based/Shared Decision Making Unit.

The participants in this project were children and their teachers in two third-grade classes and two fourth-grade classes. Any other teachers who wished to become involved with the practicum were also included. Volunteers who wished to participate were welcome. The writer was one of the teachers and the facilitator of this project. This writer is also the reading resource person in the school, providing support for other teachers in language arts instruction. The writer, who is a veteran teacher, recognized that change must take place in order for children to become effective learners.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Description of The Problem

These were the problems as experienced by the writer. The children in the third and fourth-grade classrooms had difficulty getting along with each other. They verbally abused each other by using foul language and insulting remarks. One male child described in graphic detail a sexually explicit act that a female student could perform. Another child called someone else a derogatory name and encouraged others in the class to do the same.

The children in these classes acted aggressively toward one another. They kicked each other under their desks and threw rocks at each other while on the playground. They purposely appropriated or stole objects that belonged to other students such as pencils, pens, erasers and other items from students' desks.

They made insulting remarks about other children's families. One child told another child that his mother had hair like a horse. Another student told his classmate that he had an ugly mother.

There had been minor sexual assaults made on female students that involved touching and kicking in private areas of the body. The children in both grades blamed each other

for minor occurrences.

The children complained daily about other classmates. They complained that the desks were so close together that they could not be opened easily. They dropped their pencils and then accused other students who picked them up of stealing. They blamed each other for wrong answers and they blamed each other for minor accidents, such as milk spills in the cafeteria.

The children in third grade defaced each other's work. When papers are being graded by other students, the one doing the grading would write comments all over the paper. Other students would mark a correct response incorrect in order to invoke a response from the wronged party.

Children misbehaved by not following the rules established by the class and the school. They mistreated their classmates by calling them names, insulting members of their families, taking things that did not belong to them, and performing acts of physical aggression. These children showed a lack of respect for their teachers and their school by defacing property, ignoring the rights of others and disrupting the normal classroom environment. Finally, they could not work together cohesively because they lacked the needed skills of cooperative learning that require a mutual respect for others. All of these behaviors impeded and prevented learning from occurring.

Problem Documentation

Teacher observations for two weeks revealed that children called each other names, insulted one another, committed aggressive acts against each other, and defaced one another's property.

Table 1

Table of Observations of Social Infractions for a Two Week Period.

Week 1.

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Insults	3	1	2	0	2
Name Calling	2	2	1	3	0
Aggressive Acts	1	0	2	1	1
Defacing Property	0	1	1	2	0

Week 2.

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Insults	1	2	0	2	1
Name Calling	3	2	2	1	1
Aggressive Acts	0	1	1	4	0
Defacing Property	0	0	0	1	0

Student surveys revealed attitudes that reflected hostile feelings among students in third and fourth grades.

Table 2

Table of Children's Attitude Responses In Grade 3.

	Yes	No
Positive statements regarding school	191	72
Negative statements regarding school	22	98
Positive statements regarding self	436	127
Negative statements regarding self	37	106
Statements about engaging in conflict	35	84

Table 3

Table of Children's Attitude Responses In Grade 4.

	Yes	No
Positive statements regarding school	235	85
Negative statements regarding school	60	153
Positive statements regarding self	575	124
Negative statements regarding self	47	145
Statements about engaging in conflict	48	81

Interviews with other teachers revealed that the same type of activity occurred in their classrooms. One teacher said that she observed two children fighting at the end of her line in the hall. She added that this involved the same two children every time she went somewhere with them in the school. When these two particular children were placed in different locations they would manage to come together and repeat this behavior.

Another teacher stated that name calling took place much of the time and interfered with her teaching. The physical education instructor had observed children throwing rocks, sticks and other objects while they were supposed to be engaged in cooperative activities.

The student patrols had complained to this writer that children were pushing and shoving each other before and after school. The cafeteria aides were concerned about the continued use of foul language by students in third and fourth grade during lunch time.

Causative Analysis

It is the writer's belief that there were several causes for the stated problem. Children who did not reach their full potential suffered feelings of frustration and low self-esteem. They lacked the confidence necessary to take risks

and achieve at higher levels. Many of these students sought attention through negative means.

Students who suffered from material and emotional deprivation as a result of poverty or physical neglect, felt alienated and disenfranchised from their peer group. They sought out immediate gratification as a solution and were unwilling to prolong the rewards of recognition that would be associated with goal-setting and decision-making.

Children who had never been taught good self-management skills were unable to set goals and make good choices, and therefore acted impulsively. Those students who had poor coping strategies were unable to care about themselves and others, thereby creating an environment of disrespect for themselves as well as others.

Negative behavior was an outgrowth of those problems. It occurred in classrooms on a daily basis, making it difficult for the students engaged in the behavior, as well as for their teachers and other students. Children who engaged in negative behaviors did so because of poor self-esteem, anger, frustration and an inability to cope with stressful situations in and out of the classroom.

Relationship of the Problem to The Literature

The literature revealed that most authors were in agreement about poor group interaction now occurring more

frequently in the classrooms. Typical behavior problems include arguing, teasing, vulgarity and name calling. These are surface behaviors that are not linked to deep-seated emotional problems (Levin & Nolan, 1991).

Effective schools must address the issues of how students interact with one another. The importance of consistency in dealing with disruptive behavior should be the commitment of teachers and administrators (Duke, 1990).

Supplee (1990) feels that children who do not reach their potential view school as uncomfortable, stressful, frustrating and a place to vent their emotional problems. She goes on to explain that there are many factors that influence the child's behavior in school. Some of those factors include personality variables, school settings, learning disabilities, family problems and many more.

Children who do not have good self-management skills are unable to channel their personal energy in a productive manner. These children lack a conative behavior, the mental process that deals with striving, volition, impulse or desire. Atman (1987) refers to this behavior as vectored or personal energy that has direction or magnitude.

Discipline problems occur when there is a breakdown in communication among teachers and administrators, teachers and students and among children themselves. Chaos is created when rules are not stated clearly or when they are unfair or go unenforced (Gottfredson, 1990).

Children of poverty have a higher rate of emotional distress and behavioral disorders. They suffer from many distractions such as material deprivation, anger, fear, hunger, hopelessness, alienation and other problems associated with poverty. These distractions cause them to have low expectations for themselves; consequently they become low achievers (Knapp & Shields, 1990).

Lewis (1990) concerns herself with the influence television creates. She is distressed at the fictional values and the violence that children see on television. She also feels that those children who are not valued as important people by family and friends have poor motivational skills, and are unable to set goals for themselves. These children view their situation as hopeless.

Moles (1990) is of the opinion that student misbehavior disrupts the learning process and interferes with teacher instruction and student learning. He views misbehavior as a lack of respect for teachers and fellow students.

This writer feels that misbehavior impacts on literacy and often fosters low or underachievement.

Children who do not care about others do not care about themselves. Therefore, they do not allow themselves to become involved in positive personal interactions with others and are unable to avail themselves of the learning that takes place from this.

Cooperative grouping requires the efforts of all parties involved within the group. In order to successfully gain from the situation each member must have a respect for the opinions and rights of others. When respect is not evident, cooperative learning does not take place and all of the members of the group are denied the benefits of learning.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of the writer was to help the students acquire better self-management skills in order to improve their behavior toward one another. It was anticipated that the students would develop an understanding of the ideology concerning peace and mediation skills; that these concepts would help in solving problems that would otherwise erupt in conflict behaviors. This writer expected students in third and fourth grade to learn how to enjoy group interaction in a positive and cooperative manner and learn to solve problems using conflict resolution strategies.

Behavioral Objectives

The specific objectives outlined for these third and fourth grade students were as follows:

1. 80% of the students would be able to communicate more effectively with their fellow classmates.

2. 80% of the students would be able to interact in a more positive manner.

3. 80% of the students would be able to work in a

cooperative classroom environment.

4. 80% of the students, when given a scenario depicting a possible conflict, would be able to solve the problem in a peaceful manner using learned conflict resolution strategies.

Measurement of Objectives

Each month, the four teachers who were involved in the project were asked to fill out an observation check list constructed by the writer. The checklist involved four areas necessary for developing improved conflict resolution skills.

The first objective to be measured was effective communication. Teachers would use the checklist as they observed if 80% of the students were listening to each other. They would observe if the children were responding to suggestions or recommendations of others in a positive rather than negative manner. They would ascertain if children were respecting the opinions of others and were willing to share oral and written information as they worked on their projects during class meetings.

The second objective, which involved more positive student interaction, would also be observed by the teachers. Teachers would use the checklist to determine whether or not 80% of the children were working without arguing or fighting. They would notice if children were helping one another with

the class projects or if they resented outside intervention. Teachers would be aware of how children helped one another as they worked to complete their tasks.

The third objective would be measured on the checklist as teachers continued to survey the children during the class meetings. They would identify if 80% of the children were able to work well together. Teachers would become cognizant of students who were giving and receiving help while working on their projects. They would also be able to notice if boys and girls were given equal opportunity to contribute to the group at large and if they showed concern for the wishes and needs of others.

The fourth objective was concerned with the ability of children to solve their problems in a peaceful manner. Teachers would use the checklist to determine if 80% of the children were able to work together without arguing or using profanity, were able to share materials and compromise on ways of solving problems, and concerned themselves with the welfare of the entire group.

At the bottom of the monthly checklist teachers would be asked to comment on how the children communicated, interacted, cooperated and more effectively solved problems during the class meetings. Suggestions would be considered for improving the standard of performance for the following month.

These checklists were tabulated by the writer in order to ascertain if these behaviors are being addressed. The results

of these checklists were recorded on a monthly table that was shared with the cooperating teachers. At the end of the project a final tabulation was recorded on a table for the four groups participating in the practicum.

At the end of the project the children were given a sample scenario of events that could lead to conflict. They were asked to finish the scenario and tell how they would handle the situation using conflict mediation strategies.

The posttests given to the children were graded by the teacher in charge of the project. Twenty-five points were given for answers that showed problems being solved in a peaceful manner. Five correct responses were considered an acceptable score on the posttest.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Careful observation by the writer showed that children in the third and fourth-grade classrooms had difficulty getting along with each other. They verbally abused each other by using foul language and insulting remarks. The children in these classes acted aggressively toward one another. They blamed each other for minor occurrences and defaced each other's work when given the opportunity.

Most professionals agree that teachers should establish and maintain order in the classroom through proper planning. Doyle (1990) feels that programs need to be established at the beginning of the year in order for them to be most effective. He goes on to add that control of activities and academic work is the result of good planning and interaction between teacher and student. In order to eliminate problems it is incumbent on the teacher to plan and monitor events that take place within the classroom. Orderly classrooms are those in which students cooperate with the teacher and with each other in carrying out assigned activities or tasks.

Problems are more likely to occur when rules are not stated clearly, are unfair, are not enforced consistently, or are enforced with punitive attitudes. Effective schools are

those that focus on improving communication and building trust and cooperation among students, teachers and administrators (Gottfredson, 1990). This author further states that class meetings provide students with an arena for talking about personal problems. These meetings help to eliminate fear of ridicule, promote positive interaction, increase attachments to other students and promote an understanding of social and moral values and positive attitudes. Gottfredson also views cooperative grouping as a technique for helping children learn how to get along and work well with others.

Slavin (1983) also views cooperative incentive and task structuring as successful in solving problems. He feels that cooperative incentive structure rewards all members of the group and that cooperative task structure rewards each member individually.

Walberg (1990) feels that adaptive instruction, which is one method of instructional strategy, is more suitable to fit the needs of individual differences in students and enables instruction to be carried out in small groups. He goes on to state that adaptive instruction promotes student autonomy, teacher and student choice, and intrinsic motivation.

Adaptive instruction enables teachers to reach a full range of students. It improves classroom morale, which is associated with gains in academic achievement. It also encourages voluntary participation in all other areas of group activity, including behavior.

Strong community feelings within the school help to create environments that encourage compassion, empathy and involvement in group thinking and produce feelings of self-respect, equity and a feeling for the common good (Wood, 1990). Children have the right to be physically and emotionally safe and to live and work in a non-threatening community (Supplee, 1990).

Duke (1990) also stresses the importance of communication and consistency among teachers in dealing with disruptive behaviors. He states that effective schools offer students a caring and nurturing environment where everyone, including teachers, get along. Strong administrative leadership should include teacher supervision, development and evaluation, instructional management support, resource management and coordination. Schools that foster discord among the staff and offer little support from the administration do not set good motivational examples for students to follow. Schapps & Solomon (1990) support this view and feel that schools that are perceived as caring communities improve the intellectual, social and moral environment around them.

Furtwengler (1990) feels that teachers, administrators, students, parents and the community need to make a commitment toward solving problems that occur in the school. There must be a focus of attention on the school's activity and achievements. It is important that everyone focus on the identification of and solution to problems in the school. The

identification process allows for role change within the school, adopts new roles for the students and shares the responsibility for implementing solutions to problems. Furtwengler identifies three areas where school problem solving needs change: the culture, that is, the ways things are done within the school; the climate, or the way we feel about the way things are done in the school, and the productivity of the group.

Gonzalez (1990) is in agreement that schools should establish a climate of sharing, caring and learning. A coordinated effort by the entire staff and the active involvement of all community groups helps to establish a fertile environment where children feel wanted and comfortable in the school setting.

Lewis (1990) is concerned with the importance of a value system that keeps children busy, enables them to develop motivational skills and permits them to set goals for themselves. Goal setting becomes an effective means of changing behavior. It raises productivity by improving work quality, clarifies expectations and relieves boredom (Locke & Latham, 1984). Goal setting also targets objectives and focuses on the intended learning (Walberg, 1990).

Atman (1988) is of the theory that those who possess the ability for good self-management have greater success in school. Nelson (1980) feels that children who develop an understanding of choices and responsibilities involving

themselves and others are able to take better control of their lives. He feels that children need to become choice conscious because it develops a cognitive behavioral system. It is through choice that the individual begins to exercise a degree of control over words, actions, feelings and thoughts. Atman (1987) refers to this control as vectored, or personal energy that has direction or magnitude. This energy allows the individual to examine and draw upon the motivation necessary for success and control of behavior.

Moles (1990) points out that two traditional forms of discipline, suspension and expulsion, are punitive in nature and have been overused. This punishment causes resentment and does not improve behavior. There needs to be a change in strategy before poor behavior can be eradicated.

Solution and Justification For Solution Selected

Children need to feel part of a community or family situation in order to learn how to care about one another. They need to listen to one another in order to understand that their valid needs and desires may differ from those of others.

In class meetings students can share their problems, concerns and ideas. Younger children can benefit from talking to older children. This activity allows children the experience of learning how to resolve problems and ask for advice.

Children need to learn how to appreciate the differences that exist between themselves and others. They need to have their unique qualities affirmed and be able to affirm human qualities in others.

Students need to know how to recognize the signals that can lead to violent behavior. They need to be involved in activities that teach and reinforce the use of mediation to peacefully resolve conflict. They need to visualize and develop strategies to help them resolve conflict in socially acceptable ways. Lastly, children need to acknowledge that divergent opinions are acceptable and that conflict can be avoided by using the methods they have learned.

The strategies that were implemented included the following. Two third-grade and two fourth-grade classes were kept in their own classrooms in order to provide a community atmosphere. Each of the four classes participated in cooperative grouping within the classroom.

These groups met in class meetings every week for eight months. The children were engaged in a variety of activities involving strategies that dealt with conflict resolution within their group. The meetings were designed to allow children an opportunity to explore their feelings about themselves. Activities were designed to allow the children to reflect on how they could set goals and make significant choices that would lead to conflict resolution.

Follow-up activities allowed children to work together

within their self-contained classrooms. These activities included role playing and developing self-management skills to foster individual awareness of goal setting and decision making.

The children maintained a portfolio of some of these activities in order to evaluate their progress as mediators and help them take their place as peacekeepers in a peaceful environment inside and outside of the classroom.

Report of Action Taken

Month One

Week One

Each of the third and fourth-grade students selected for the project discussed a common occurrence that took place before the beginning of this school year. The neighborhood had experienced a deadly hurricane that affected the lives and emotions of all the inhabitants of our city and brought significant changes to all involved. The children discussed their fears and experiences and discovered that they shared many common bonds. The children were asked to illustrate their perceptions and misconceptions about the storm. These stories and pictures were read and shared with the group.

The original plan for this project was to have the third and fourth grade classes paired. However, from the first day

of school it became apparent that the classes were too large to have combined groups. It was decided to have the children remain in their own classes and pair off with their classmates. The activities for the first day were designed to have the children meet one another and share their summer experiences and stories about what happened to them during the storm.

The first day of school became the first class meeting. Activities had been designed to have children meet one another and listen to their stories. It was an excellent introduction for new classmates who were meeting for the first time.

The word vision was introduced to the children at this time and all of the classes talked about children's goals for the future. It was necessary for children to understand the difference between realistic expectations and dreams that would be difficult to obtain.

The children were still talking about the Olympic games which had taken place earlier in the summer. The girls were impressed with the gymnasts and were quite surprised to learn that training for this sport begins at about four years old and peaks at age fifteen or sixteen. They were also surprised to learn about how intensive the training was and the kind of discipline it required to become a world class gymnast. Many of the girls envisioned themselves on the high bar or the balance beam. This was a vision they shared with each other. They did not concern themselves with realistic

goals but sought to give free reign to their imaginations. The boys were equally impressed with the track and field events and the swimming and diving events.

After we discussed their visions, the project was explained to the children and a new vocabulary was generated for use throughout the coming eight months. This explanation was followed with a letter that was sent home to the parents at the end of the week, so they were informed of what was going on in the classrooms.

Initially, children were allowed to sit wherever they wanted. After the second day the teacher regrouped the children so that they were sitting next to students whom they did not know. They remained in these groups through the first grading period which lasted nine weeks.

School rules require children to sit in permanent seats in the school lunchroom. The children were assigned to sit with students who were not necessarily in their group in the classroom. This was to allow them the opportunity to become acquainted with others in the class on a social level.

Toward the end of the week the teacher explained different types of conflicts and wrote examples of each on the board. With the help of the children, solutions were written on the board to help serve as models. The children chose a partner within their group and together they wrote down a conflict they had experienced, seen or envisioned. On the back of the paper they wrote out a possible solution to the

conflict. These papers were shared with the total group.

The first week ended on a positive note with the children eager to discover more about becoming peacemakers. They seemed to agree that fighting was not the way to solve problems and that peaceful solutions were more acceptable.

Week Two

At the beginning of the week the children were asked to bring in baby pictures of themselves. We talked about the picture and compared the picture to the child. The children were asked to describe themselves and talk about what features they liked the best. Later they were asked to write down their descriptions and to illustrate the way they perceived themselves. These pictures and descriptions were placed inside a portfolio.

The teachers reviewed the vocabulary generated during the first week. The meanings of conflict and conflict resolutions were discussed. The third and fourth-grade teachers read the story about Michael and his bad morning. After hearing the story the children described the conflicts Michael experienced. Working with their partners, each child listed at least two possible choices that Michael could have made in order to solve the conflict. The children on both grade levels really enjoyed this activity and worked well in their cooperative groups.

In this week we initiated a new early morning segment.

Children used the school-wide loudspeaker in the main office to inform their schoolmates about world events and holiday celebrations. The students took turns reading from a book about the ways holidays are celebrated around the world.

The first holiday we read about was Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the Jewish New Year. One of the students in the class was Jewish and he explained about the celebration that took place in his home. This holiday culminated in Yom Kippur and we discussed the fasting that took place during this part of the holiday.

Week Three

The children and the teachers discussed and explored their definitions of peace and harmony,. Each child offered his or her own definition of the concept of peace. There were many definitions given and it was clear that each child had his own concept of what the word really means.

The children drew pictures of what they thought peace meant. The drawings were transferred to posters and placed around the room for everyone to see.

Week Four

Each teacher working in conflict resolution was given a set of activities to use with the children. These activities were designed to help children relate to themselves so they would, in time, be able to relate to others on a more positive level. Children were asked to take a closer look at themselves and they began an introspection that enabled them

to become more aware and more tolerant of their needs and the needs of others.

Month Two

Week One

This week the students discussed individual and unique qualities that they possessed and learned to affirm each other as special and unique people. They discussed attributes of strengths and weaknesses. These included academic skills as well as individual talents and gifts. They were also asked to take notice of each other and explain what they would like others to appreciate in them. They made pictures of their partners, being very careful to reflect the positive qualities they observed in each other.

The subject of sexual harassment and abuse was brought up at this time. Some of the children offered examples of what they thought these words meant.We discussed the definitions of these words and talked openly in the class meeting of how children and adults could be affected by these problems.

Week Two

The children discussed their definitions of conflict resolution. They talked about conflicts they had been involved in and how they were able to solve their problems. It was soon discovered that some of the conflicts did not end peacefully. There were many different examples of conflict, which were listed on the board. The children talked about how

these problems could have been solved peacefully.

Children were encouraged to role play some of their past experiences with other children. It was interesting to see how differently boys solved their problems than girls. The boys were much more physical while the girls relied on verbal communication.

After role playing the children were asked to write down a conflict they had experienced, witnessed or envisioned. The children were asked to write down what they would consider a good solution would be. After writing down their solutions the children were asked to share their stories with the group.

Week Three

The children practiced "I" messages. "I" messages are really examples of how the children felt about themselves. The teacher modeled an example on the board. One example would be to say "I feel happy," or "I want you to be my friend." The children role-played problems that might lead to conflict. They learned how to use the "I" messages in conflict resolution.

After the role-playing the children talked about conflict situations that personally affected them at school or at home. They shared their personal stories with their partners. Many found that others had experienced the same kind of situations.

Week Four

The children reviewed the definitions of conflict and conflict resolution. The word commitment was introduced and the children were asked to look up the word and offer their interpretations of the meaning of this concept.

The guidelines for fair fighting were presented by each of the teachers. The children then engaged in role-playing which depicted conflict situations, using the guidelines that were outlined by the instructor.

Month Three

Week One

The activity for this week centered around listening. After a discussion about the art of listening the children engaged in a dialogue with their partners. After each child had an opportunity to speak, the partner would repeat or mirror the message. The children took turns, often laughing at themselves as they parroted their partner. At the end of the session the children drew pictures of themselves showing how they felt while someone was listening to them.

Week Two

This week the children were asked to brainstorm their ideas about possible conflict resolution strategies. Working with their partners the children were asked to be as creative as possible and come up with new ideas. The children recorded their responses on paper and then made posters illustrating ways that people could resolve conflict.

Week Three

The students working on conflict resolution formed a group known as "The Litter Busters." After a class meeting, where care of the environment and respect for home and school were discussed, the children decided that they needed to assume more responsibility for their school and the area that surrounds it.

Teams were formed in each class to monitor the halls and grounds around the school. Children armed with plastic bags canvassed the areas for paper, cans and other litter that had been carelessly thrown away. These children made their rounds first thing in the morning. They became aware of every little bit of paper and trash as they walked through the halls. Children often returned to their classroom laden with all kinds of trash.

Week Four

Hurricane Andrew had many effects on the population of our city. Many people had lost everything they owned, which included homes and personal possessions. In many instances the storm had damaged their places of work so they were left without their jobs as well.

The situation in the area was critical. It was decided that children and their families could help storm victims by having a food drive, which would last for several weeks and would include the entire school. To generate interest and get results, the students decided to have a contest with a reward

of a pizza party for the room that would bring in the most food.

Month Four

Week One

Each one of the four classrooms had contained children from a diverse ethnic population, representing families who had emigrated from countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America as well as from Pakistan, Korea and China. Families were of various religious groups and observed different kinds of holidays and celebrations.

The children were asked to share their cultures with the groups at class meetings. They combined this activity with the morning announcements where children read and talked about important days enjoyed by different ethnic groups.

Parents came to the classes wearing their traditional dress if it was different from that of the western culture. Interaction between the students of different ethnicities was encouraged so that a respect for differences among individuals became the focal point of discussion.

The children brought in pictures and stories about other cultures. Many children went to the library and wrote reports about the countries where they or their parents were born. Others brought in objects that were made in their native countries to share with classmates.

The map of the world was placed on the bulletin board and

the names of the children were placed on the country that signified their heritage. It was interesting to see how many different places were represented.

Week Two

The children explored the concept of peacemaking and how to identify themselves as peacemakers. They used charts that illustrated the role and qualities of a peacemaker. Each child was encouraged to participate in a discussion of how they acted as peacemakers during a time of conflict and were able to share their experiences with the group.

Week Three

This week the focus centered on the uniqueness of each person in the group. The teacher introduced a relaxation exercise with the children. While in a relaxed state, the children were asked to envision something they were good at doing. The children were permitted to share their thoughts with the group. They were also encouraged to write their ideas and thoughts on paper, illustrate them and add them to the portfolios.

Week Four

Winter Break - No school

Month Five

Week One

Winter Break - No school

Week Two

On their return from school after the winter break, the children were asked to list those things that they felt were important for a safe and non-threatening school atmosphere. They were also asked what they could do to maintain a peaceful environment. After making their list they were eager to share their thoughts with the group.

Week Three

The relaxation exercise was used to help the children envision a time when they felt special either at home or in school. Their visions or thoughts were shared with the group. After the sharing session the children were asked to illustrate their special moments. The children were encouraged to take these pictures home to share with their families rather than add them to the portfolio.

Week Four

The children discussed attributes of friendship. They listed those significant attitudes that they looked for in friends. They discussed the attitudes that they brought to a friendship and commented on how they felt about themselves and their friends.

The children created a bulletin board with words that described themselves. Each child wrote a paragraph about

self-perception. These papers were mounted and placed on the bulletin board. This was a voluntary project and those children who did not feel comfortable with putting their private thoughts into words were not required to do so.

The vocabulary generated by the discussion and the written papers helped the children bond with each other and enabled them to identify attributes in themselves that they looked for in others.

Month Six

Week One

Teachers and children discussed the concept that peace begins with oneself and the different ways each person can take responsibility for his/her own actions in pursuing that peace. With the use of the relaxation exercise the teachers guided the children through several steps of feeling peaceful. Through this exercise children were asked to use their imagination to envision a place that was peaceful, safe and beautiful. When angry or upsetting situations arose, children were told to reflect back on that peaceful vision.

Using their unique abilities and feelings the children were able to transfer their thoughts to paper by illustrating how they looked when they were feeling peaceful. They wrote about this experience in their journals at the end of the day.

Week Three

Current events became a weekly activity. With so much going on in the world it was not difficult to find articles in newspapers and magazines or features on television news programs that dealt with conflict situations.

The children were asked to bring in articles about conflicts in different places around the world. They brainstormed ideas of how these situations could be remedied. All were in agreement that the United States should take an active part in bringing food to Somalia.

Watching the nightly news programs and reading the paper became rituals in many homes so that students could share with their classmates what they had seen and read. The children became quite good at evaluating different situations and then offering peaceful solutions.

Week Four

The children listened to a story about Helen Keller. Her victory over her handicaps amazed the children and encouraged them to discuss how she managed to live her life and achieve success as a writer and lecturer.

Using the relaxation exercises the students were encouraged to develop personal visions of goals they hoped to achieve and share them with the others. They illustrated their visions and added these papers to their portfolios.

Month Seven

Week One

The children talked again about a peaceful school environment. They drew pictures of what they thought this school should look like. Then they talked about a school in conflict and drew another picture of how they thought it would look.

In making comparisons children talked about the feelings they have when they feel peaceful and safe and the way they feel when things are in conflict. In comparing both feelings all of the children preferred the peaceful environment.

Week Two

At the class meeting all of the names of children in the class were placed into a container. After choosing a name at random, each child listed the unique qualities of the classmate selected.

After the children took turns reading their list, they revealed the name of the person of whom they were speaking. This proved to be a very effective exercise which the children enjoyed very much.

Week Three

The children were asked to observe the special and unique differences of each child in the group. They took notice of the different hair colors, eye colors, heights and weights. Everyone lined up according to height to see where they fell in the group. Everyone wanted to be taller than the next one.

Working in small groups the students cut out pictures of children who were different or came from different cultures. They arranged these pictures in collages which were hung around the room.

Week Four

In observance of Black History Month, books were circulated among the teachers describing achievements made by blacks in America. The list was extensive and covered all different areas of importance.

Most of the children were not familiar with how black people had come to this country so we read books that dealt with slavery. The children were saddened when they heard some of the documentation of how slaves were treated.

A film called The Liberators was shown. This is the story of how one courageous white man led slaves to freedom before the Emancipation Proclamation was passed. The discussion then progressed to how blacks were treated in this country after they were freed from slavery. The teachers shared their experiences about living in a segregated south with the group and a television story depicting black Americans in the 1950's was shown.

The children were asked to discuss their feelings about these films. This discussion allowed children to vent such emotions as sadness, anger and surprise. They showed their concerns for the feelings of the characters in the films and also tried to imagine what it would be like to change places.

Month Eight

Week One

Each child was asked to make a list of those things that bothered or irritated them. They talked about things that "bugged" them and were asked to draw giant bugs. They made a list of things they considered bothersome and pasted the lists on the bugs.

Many children discovered that they shared the same irritabilities and were able to relate incidents that had annoyed them in class, on the playground, on the bus or at home. The children were definite about things that really annoyed them or got them angry.

Week Two

This was the week designated for Field Day. All classes were to take part in track and field events. Among those events to be judged were those that required team effort such as the parade of story book characters, tug-of-war, over-under relay, and baton relay races.

The winning team from each grade level receives a trophy. This particular classroom had won the trophy for the past five years and it was a matter of pride for this teacher that it should remain in the room. The children were also anxious to win so the week began with mental preparations.

These preparations involved visioning and use of the

relaxation exercises taught throughout the project. The children were asked to envision what it would be like to win the trophy. They would be able to wear their ribbons at school and enjoy being the victors. They were asked to do the relaxation exercises before and after practicing for their events.

The class talked about how children viewed victory and defeat. The concept of cheating was mentioned as was being a good winner and/or a sore loser. When the children were asked what they would rather be they responded with winner.

Before the games the class did their stretching exercises, followed by their visioning and relaxation exercises. The class showed a great deal of eagerness to combine their athletic talents in a team victory.

Week Three

The class had a visitor. A six-year-old blind child, a friend of the writer, came to school to talk about her experiences as a student. She brought a brailler and an abacus to show the children how her writing, reading and math instruction differed from theirs.

The children were very impressed with the visit and the little girl. She told them the story of how her blindness came about and what she did to compensate for the loss of her sight.

Week Four

The children in all four classes were given a posttest describing different scenarios that could be resolved by peaceful means. Each scenario required a brief answer.

Chapter V

Results, Discussion, Recommendations and Dissemination

Results

The main goal of this practicum was to help the students acquire better self-management skills in order to improve their behavior toward one another. Class meetings provided the arena where techniques for solving problems, role playing and interactive group participation could take place. These class meetings took place once a week, but techniques that required children to solve their own problems were shared daily. Two third-grade classes and two fourth-grade classes and their teachers took part in the project.

A second goal was to help students communicate more effectively with their fellow classmates. This goal was accomplished by encouraging students to give voice to their feelings and tell their classmates how they felt. Sharing stories and experiences with other children enabled them to recognize situations that could cause anger and lead to violence.

Another goal was to have students interact in a more positive manner with each other. This was achieved through working together in cooperative groups. Children were encouraged to work with each other in class to complete tasks that included spelling, math, reading, science and social

studies.

An additional goal was to produce a cooperative classroom environment for children to work in. Teamwork and peer tutoring enabled students to work in a safe non-threatening atmosphere. Children were encouraged to complete their homework in class with the assistance of other students and the teacher. They were also urged to ask questions of the teacher and others if they were unable to understand the material presented. Teamwork was encouraged through special events such as school-wide competition in bulletin board and door displays and field day.

The last goal was to empower students with the ability to solve problems that could erupt into violent situations, in peaceful ways using conflict resolution strategies. This was accomplished by role playing, observations, and discussions that included techniques for mediation.

The primary goal of helping children develop better self-management skills in order to improve their behavior toward one another was quite successful. The secondary goals of enabling children to work in a more positive manner allowed for greater academic growth and conation on the part of the child. The additional goal of encouraging a cooperative classroom environment provided the children with the self-confidence and self-esteem needed to produce an atmosphere of peace and harmony in the classroom. The final goal of solving problems peacefully enabled children to feel comfortable and

safe with classmates that respected their gender and ethnicity.

On the posttest, all of the 103 students who took part responded in a positive way about resolving conflict. Not one paper mentioned a negative response. Most of the children felt that each problem itself should be confronted and then resolved by the parties involved. In some instances they felt that a third party should intervene as a mediator.

Table 4

Table of Teacher Observations of Skills For Grade 3.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Communication	4	4	0	0
Interaction	8	0	0	0
Cooperation	5	2	1	0

Table 5

Table of Teacher Observations of Skills For Grade 4.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Communication	0	4	4	0
Interaction	7	1	0	0
Cooperation	3	4	1	0

Table 6

Table of Teacher Observations of Grades 3 and 4.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Communication				
Listening	1	2	1	0
Interrupt	0	1	3	0
Respect	0	2	2	0
Feedback	0	3	1	0
Allow others to speak	2	2	0	0
Speak clearly	0	4	0	0
Write clearly	1	2	1	0
Interaction				
No arguing	0	3	1	0
Respect rights	0	3	1	0
Take suggestions	0	4	0	0
Air concerns	0	3	1	0
Concern for others	0	2	2	0
Cooperation				
Share ideas	0	3	1	0
Respect ideas	0	2	2	0
All contribute	0	2	2	0
Equal opportunity	3	1	0	0
Work together	0	3	1	0

Offer help	3	1	0	0
Show concern	2	2	0	0
Tasks completed	0	3	1	0
Conflict Resolution				
Argue	1	1	2	0
Use acceptable language	2	1	1	0
Respect other opinions	0	3	1	0
Share materials	0	3	1	0
Agree	0	3	1	0
Concern for welfare	0	4	0	0

Table 7

Table of Children's Responses of Attitudes on Posttest For Grades 3 and 4.

	Positive	Negative
	opposed to violence	in favor of violence
Unkind remarks	103	0
Arguing	103	0
Fighting	103	0
Throwing objects	103	0
Tripping	103	0
Pushing	103	0
Shouting	103	0
Stealing	103	0

Discussion

The children in these third and fourth-grade classes learned to communicate with their fellow students, work with one another harmoniously, respect each other's unique qualities and develop an awareness of non-violent behavior. In a year that was fraught with devastation, fear, anger, frustration, depression and in some cases despair, these children and their teachers succeeded in finding a peaceful way of ending conflict and solving problems.

Hurricane Andrew blew into the city just one week prior to the opening of school. The effects of the storm were so devastating that the county was completely immobilized for a period of two weeks and in some areas remains destroyed as long as eight months later.

School opening was delayed until the middle of September because alternate plans had to be made for those schools that had been completely or partially destroyed by the storm. In many hurricane-destroyed areas residents were forced to seek homes in other parts of the county, denying children the ability to attend school in their neighborhoods.

During the opening of school several things became apparent. Student enrollment at this school had increased substantially because we had to take in children from the devastated areas. Children were still trying to cope with fears that were a direct result of the storm. Several of the

teachers had lost their homes and the physical conditions at the school had been altered.

The entire community looked as though it had been ravaged by a war rather than a storm. Large trees that once shaded the school had been toppled. In their place were gaping holes and giant roots that stuck up from the ground. Emergency repair crews had removed the fallen trees but the stumps and holes remained, leaving the area that surrounded the physical education field a potential hazard to students.

Teachers who were engaged in this practicum were also affected by the hurricane. Many suffered severe damage to their homes and some were forced to relocate because their homes were no longer habitable. One teacher whose home was in the direct path of the storm was fortunate to find shelter for herself and her family in a recreational vehicle. The Air Force Base where her husband was stationed was completely destroyed, thereby adding more chaos to her life and a threat to the livelihood of her family.

Children from the affected areas were placed in temporary housing in our neighborhood. In many cases these children and their families had lost homes and personal possessions. These children were under greater stress since they had been displaced and were now being asked to renew their school life away from friends, familiar surroundings and the stability of their homes.

In surveying the conditions established for the practicum it was necessary to make adjustments to the original plan. The third and fourth-grade classes were so large because of the inflated population that it would not be possible for us to have these groups work together. Instead it was decided that the class meetings would take place within the individual classrooms.

The project began with a meeting of all teachers involved. Each teacher was given a calendar plan to use with the classes. It was explained to the teachers that they would receive a new set of activities each month. These activities centered around strategies for conflict resolution and were designed to help children share their thoughts and help them relate to each other. These activities served as a support system which proved to be very helpful to both teacher and child. It gave the teacher some direction and the children an idea of what they were supposed to be doing.

The teachers were asked to keep a portfolio for each child so they could see how they were progressing and to fill out a monthly progress form. Several teachers in third and fourth grade who were not part of the project asked to participate on a voluntary basis. They were also given the calendar plan and the activity packets.

School began three weeks behind schedule. The first week was devoted to dispelling fears, soothing children and offering them the solace of a place where they could give

voice to their fears and concerns. Hurricane Andrew had been so traumatic that time had to be allotted for children to talk about their experiences as a result of the storm.

In words and pictures they chronicled their stories. They shared emotions and discussed what it meant to be afraid. Everyone found they shared similar feelings of fear, upset and inconvenience that events of the storm had caused.

The children were encouraged to look ahead and not dwell on the past. This was not an easy task because daily living conditions proved to be a constant reminder of what had happened. Trash pick-up did not take place for about seven weeks after the storm and many homes and yards remained in a state of ruin until normal services and repairs could take place.

In the second week of school the writer had the children read from a book about holidays. The children who were chosen to read showed great enthusiasm for what they were doing. They were eager to take their excerpts home to study and practice several times so that their reading became fluent. They arrived early the following morning and awaited their turn at the microphone. The children enjoyed hearing their classmates as they spoke over the loud speaker and applauded them when they returned to the classroom. The readers were delighted when their classmates rewarded them with recognition. Parents often stayed in the room in order to hear their children read. Self-esteem was at its highest as

each child basked in his finest moment in front of the microphone.

In the fourth week of school a new class was added to the third grade. Children were again shifted to new classes and more adjustments had to be made. In order to resume continuity the new teacher was given an orientation of the project and furnished with materials to help her implement the strategies.

This same week a case of sexual harassment involving seven-year-old children on a school bus in another city reached the media. This subject opened a discussion about how children and people were being treated in society today. The children had many interesting comments about what was going on in the school bus, on the playground, in the class and the cafeteria. The girls became outspoken about the treatment they were receiving from the boys, teachers and people with whom they came in contact. All of the children were quick to recognize harassment and abuse when it happened to them.

At the beginning of the fifth week the community began a food drive. The four classes were encouraged to get their families and friends involved. Each day children brought in canned or packaged foods. The drive started slowly but people were gracious enough to send what they could. The children recognized the need for more participation and made a concerted effort to improve the drive. It was decided to have a contest. Every Tuesday the food would be picked up from the

classrooms. It would be counted and placed on a tally sheet. At the end of the contest the class bringing in the most food would get a pizza party courtesy of the P.T.A. One of the fourth-grade classes involved in the practicum won the contest and enjoyed their pizza.

The first week of the second month kicked off the drive for The United Way. Parents had been asked for donations the week before at their work places. The emphasis was placed on relief for hurricane victims. Donations were slow to come in. People were still suffering from damage to their own property, loss of income due to destroyed businesses, or having to take days off in order to take care of personal problems such as repairing their homes or their cars. The timing for this event was poor but it was necessary to try to offer help to people who had suffered the most.

After the drive for the United Way the school cabinet decided to have Red Ribbon Week, a week set aside to teach children the dangers of drugs. Wearing a red ribbon signified saying **NO** to taking drugs. All of the children were encouraged to participate by engaging in all planned activities.

One of the week's activities was a contest for the best door decoration. The children were asked for their ideas and each one drew their own picture of what they thought the door should look like. The children, working in cooperative groups, selected the best picture from their group. The

children voted on the five group winners and one out of the five was chosen to be replicated. For one whole day the teacher and children worked on the door design. The class received first place and every child was rewarded with a blue ribbon. All the participants wore the ribbons proudly as a symbol of their team effort.

The practicum was proceeding nicely when one day two little girls in third grade became involved in a touching and pushing confrontation. The girls involved and witnesses were asked to step outside to talk about what had happened. The girls explained that one child had touched the other on the shoulder and the second child had responded with a punch to the arm of the first girl. Both girls became upset and the child who was punched began to cry. The girls were reminded about self-control and were reminded not to touch each other again. On returning to the classroom the class held a brief discussion and role play using mediating strategies to resolve what could have been a major confrontation.

The following morning a very angry young mother appeared at the writer's door and demanded a meeting. She was the mother of the second child, but because there were already children in the room it was explained to her that an appointment would be necessary for a conference to take place. This angered her further and she shouted that she did not want her child told to practice self-control. She had taught her child that if hit she was to hit back. The young mother was

informed about the philosophy of the school and the policy of the classroom regarding response to violence. The mother, unimpressed with conflict resolution, left the room with her child. This appears to be the thinking that goes on in many homes and seems to perpetuate violent behaviors in adults as well as children.

The year was progressing very well. The children enjoyed working with their groups and looked forward to having their class meetings each week. There were very few confrontations and children were solving their problems peacefully.

One afternoon, while waiting to enter the classroom a little girl turned to a boy and said to him, "I don't like what you said to me. Don't say it again!" The little fellow was so surprised that all he could do was apologize and he reassured the girl that it would not happen again.

One day a fourth-grade child brought a knife to school in his bookbag. The other children noticed it and brought it to the attention of the teacher. The knife was removed, the parents were called and the child was reprimanded by the principal. This was an unusual happening and was never repeated.

A new child entered the classroom in the fourth month of the practicum. This child had a past history of fighting, using profanity and showing disrespect for other students. He was informed of the current policy of this school but continued his own poor behavior. The other children would not

respond to him in anything but a positive manner when he tried to engage them in a confrontation. They informed him that if he continued acting in a negative manner he would find himself with very few friends. When he called them names they responded in a manner that told him in a firm way that they did not like what he said and they moved away so he could not taunt them into a fight. The child soon learned about conflict resolution and later became a valued member of the group.

One of the teachers planned a field trip to the museum for five classes of third-graders. There were about one hundred-thirty-children involved and not one incident of name calling or fighting took place. The third grade teachers were very pleased because they had never been able to take that many children on any trip without some kind of confrontation.

When the blind child visited the class the children were impressed with her poise. Although she was only six-and-a-half she demonstrated the self-assurance of a child much older. The children sensed her maturity and intelligence. They treated her with respect and kindness and acceptance. Several days later one boy mentioned that she was probably more intelligent than some children in our class. The rest of the class appeared to agree with him. On a trip to the fair another student recognized our visitor, approached her, introduced himself and told her how happy he was to see her again and asked her to come back to the class for another

visit.

Teachers and administrators were pleasantly surprised when they visited classrooms where conflict resolution strategies were being implemented. Children were always busy on task, working in groups or with a peer tutor. Children were completing their work satisfactorily and making good progress academically.

The children appeared to be happy and attendance was high. Parents were delighted that their children were eager to go to school each day. On one occasion a grandmother came to pick up her grandchildren early because of a storm warning. The child in the writer's class was summoned to the office for early dismissal. She said in a firm voice, "I don't want to go home now, I want to stay." Her grandmother respected her request, gave her the umbrella, and left with the younger child.

On Field Day a great deal of emphasis was placed on team efforts and doing one's best. Winning was important but it was also important to be a gracious winner or loser. The children were very excited, as was the writer, which generated a great deal of energy and determination. Everyone was elated when the relay races were won and disappointed when other events were lost. When all of the points had been tabulated it was determined that the winning team was that of the writer.

The class was rewarded with a trophy and ribbons for all events. Additional rewards given by the teacher included breakfast at a local fast-food restaurant and a special day set aside for fun and games. Parents who went along as chaperons for breakfast were surprised and delighted at how well the children ordered their breakfast, ate and socialized with each other. The manager was also pleased to have so many well mannered customers and invited the class to come back.

It is the opinion of this writer that the lessons learned in conflict resolution strategies will be utilized for many years. It is hoped that others will benefit from the examples of these third and fourth-grade students.

Hurricane Andrew was a destructive force that impacted our environment. However, the entire neighborhood with the aid of other communities is working to put the city together again. People have come from other states to help in the repair and rebuilding of homes and businesses that were destroyed as a result of the storm. Children helped provide food and clothing for families who lost personal possessions. Toys and books have been collected to help children get over the trauma they have suffered. Schools that suffered minimal damage shared books and other supplies with those who were less fortunate.

The children involved in the practicum witnessed acts of love, respect and kindness from the community at large as well as from people who were strangers. The children themselves

became instrumental in helping others through their generous donations. Everyone is cooperating to put the area back together again.

Children are learning everyday that they can accomplish more through teamwork and group effort. They need to try to establish an atmosphere of peace, tranquillity and cooperation and in turn pass it on to their children so that it is perpetuated. Little children need to be taught these lessons so they may grow and prosper as the result of that legacy.

Recommendations

Throughout history wars have caused death, destruction and despair. Conflict and violence have become a way of life for many people over the years. Unless people can learn to resolve their problems in a peaceful manner violence will continue.

Every day educators search for ways to prevent violence in the schools. As society becomes more complex and as people suffer greater adversity from poverty, deprivation, dysfunction and depression, the situation becomes more volatile. Students are fearful they will be molested on the way to or from school. They are afraid of violence from their peers on school grounds and they are apprehensive that their

interactions with other students may be misinterpreted.

There have been many instances of violence in the city where this school is located. In one high school one student was killed by another because he was talking to a girl who was someone else's friend. This was not the first time that a shooting had occurred at this particular school but it was the first fatality. In the same school another student, insulted by a classmate, went home to get a shotgun and returned to school seeking retribution.

These incidents are happening with great regularity in urban and rural communities around the country. Violence surrounds us in every city and on every continent. In Liverpool, England, two ten-year-old children were accused of beating a two-year-old child to death. The media informs us everyday of violence all over the world. It has become clear that children are not safe at school.

If children are to be protected from violence, it is up to the adults who are in charge to teach children the skills required to find alternative ways of dealing with events that could lead to violent confrontations. Therefore it is up to the schools to implement this kind of education.

A major beginning would be to teach parents to use alternate ways of disciplining children that do not include violence. However, many parents are not interested in attending classes to learn how to deal peacefully with undisciplined children. Therefore, educators need to adjust

the curriculum to include conflict resolution strategies for children, beginning in preschool. Instruction should be given every year so that children will come to understand that nonviolent behavior is preferred.

By the time a child arrives at school for the first time he has learned to strike back in some physical way. He has learned that words are powerful and can be used to inflict pain. Children need to learn how to harness their rage and anger and utilize their energy for the benefit of themselves and their peers.

Teaching conflict resolution strategies allows children to express themselves in ways that do not cause harm to themselves or others. These forms of behavior allow children options that will guide them through life and offer better preparation for the world outside the classroom.

Dissemination

The school system in the county where the practicum took place was upset by a catastrophic storm. Several schools were partially or totally destroyed. Educators and students were displaced from their homes. Parents found themselves jobless because the buildings in which they worked were blown away by Andrew. The entire county was forced to face a major restructuring.

Schools were also faced with a major task of restructuring what the storm had blown away. In place of the current programs educators were asked to provide a program that would empower teachers with more effective ways to help their students. This program is called The Phoenix Project.

This project outlines many areas of restructuring that deal with academic learning and discipline. One of the platforms in The Phoenix Project is the teaching of conflict resolution strategies.

The writer and author of this project has been approached by the head administrator to take charge of teaching conflict resolution to the entire school population. This would require retraining teachers to achieve goals of effective communication, mediation, and respect for other individuals and the environment. This practicum would serve as the syllabus for this type of retraining.

Other teachers in the school are aware of the pilot program and its success and look forward to achieving similar results with their students. Information will be shared with fellow educators who show an interest in the project.

In addition, the writer plans to write articles for publication on the subject of conflict resolution. It is the author's vision that others will want to follow the same path in preparing children for a future in a peaceful world.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS

September, 1992

Dear Parents,

Congratulations! Your child has been chosen to become a peacemaker. The children in his/her class will be taking part in a program that will prepare him/her as a leader for a more peaceful environment.

This special project will take place over the 1992-1993 school year. We look forward to a peaceful future in and out of the classroom at Coral Park Elementary.

Your comments and your participation are welcome.

Peace,

Myra S. Locke

APPENDIX B

ATTITUDE SURVEY OF STUDENTS
IN GRADES THREE AND FOUR

Read each sentence carefully. If the sentence is true circle y for yes. If the sentence is not true circle n for no.

1. I wake up every morning looking forward to school. y n
2. I enjoy going to school. y n
3. It takes me a long time to wake up in the morning. y n
4. I have many good friends at school. y n
5. I enjoy seeing my classmates everyday. y n
6. I wish I didn't have to go to school. y n
7. I like my vacations but I am always eager to go back to school. y n
8. I think people in my class care about me. y n
9. I like the people in my class. y n
10. I like to tease other kids. y n
11. School is boring. y n
12. The children in my class like me. y n
13. My friends are at school. y n
14. When I am at school I feel all alone. y n
15. I really like myself. y n
16. I am satisfied with my school work. y n
17. I like when others help me. y n
18. I prefer to work by myself. y n
19. I care about the children in my class. y n
20. Sometimes I am angry. y n
21. I like to watch people fight. y n
22. My teacher really cares about me. y n
23. I like to learn about many things. y n
24. People in my class really listen to me. y n
25. I eat breakfast every morning. y n

26. I do not have any friends.	y	n
27. I do lots of things well.	y	n
28. I like to fight with other kids.	y	n
29. I think I am always right.	y	n
30. Other kids pick on me.	y	n
31. I have a hard time getting along with others.	y	n
32. I like school.	y	n
33. I am always happy.	y	n
34. I am always sad.	y	n
35. School work is easy for me.	y	n
36. I care about the children in my class.	y	n
37. School is a fun place.	y	n
38. I work well with others in my group.	y	n
39. I have many friends.	y	n
40. Everyone likes me.	y	n
41. When I make a mistake I can get help.	y	n
42. I respect the other children in the class.	y	n
43. Sometimes I call other kids bad names.	y	n
44. When I am at school I feel afraid.	y	n
45. Sometimes I feel left out.	y	n
46. I feel smart.	y	n
47. I don't care about school.	y	n
48. I wish I didn't have to go to school.	y	n
49. I think school is a happy place.	y	n
50. I like to play with the children in my class.	y	n

APPENDIX C

MONTHLY OBSERVATION

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

DIRECTIONS: Place a check next to the statement that best describes the situation.

Are the children able to:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Communicate effectively with one another.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Engage in positive interaction.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Work in cooperative groups.	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D

FINAL OBSERVATION

OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

DIRECTIONS: Place a check next to the statement that best describes the situation.

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Communication				
Do the children listen to each other?	____	____	____	____
Do they interrupt each other?	____	____	____	____
Do they respect the opinions of others?	____	____	____	____
Are the children able to provide feedback to each other?	____	____	____	____
Do they give others an opportunity to speak?	____	____	____	____
Do they speak clearly?	____	____	____	____
Do they write so others understand what is written?	____	____	____	____
Interaction				
Do the children work together without arguing?	____	____	____	____
Do they respect the rights of others?	____	____	____	____
Do they take suggestions from others well?	____	____	____	____
Do they give others time to air concerns?	____	____	____	____

Are they concerned about each others feelings?	_____	_____	_____	_____

Cooperation

Do they share ideas?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Are all members in the group respected for their ideas?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Does everyone contribute to the work involved?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Is everyone given an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do they work in a positive manner with each other?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do the children offer to help one another?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do they show concern for each other?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Are the tasks completed?	_____	_____	_____	_____

Conflict Resolution

Do the children argue?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do they use acceptable classroom language when working together?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do they respect conflicting opinions?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Do they share materials?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Are they able to agree on acceptable solutions?	_____	_____	_____	_____
Are they concerned about the welfare of the group?	_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX E

POSTTEST

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Read each problem carefully. Tell, in a few words, what you would do to solve each one.

1. Someone comes up to you in class and makes an unkind remark. What would you do?

2. Two children are playing together and ask you to join them. They begin to argue over the game. What would you do?

3. You see children fighting. What would you do?

4. A child throws a rock and hits you. What would you do?

5. Someone trips you with his/her foot. What would you do?

6. You are in line and someone pushes you. What would you do?

7. The teacher leaves the room and children begin to shout and fight. What would you do?

8. Someone takes a pencil or pen that belongs to you and you see them using it. What would you do?

APPENDIX F

SOURCES FOR CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES

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